3: Lorimer L-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1935 AV7 Burusho AV7

THE LANGUAGE.

212 Having described in some measure the country where Burushaski is spoken and the people who speak it, I must now give some account of the language itself and of the influences to which it has, at least in recent times, been subjected.

[538] Burushaski[1] has no literature and is in fact an unwritten language. Obliging friends may have occasionally written Burushaski letters or texts in the Arabic script to humour enquiring foreigners such as Leitner or myself, but no convention has ever been arrived at to represent the sounds which are unknown to Arabic, Persian or Hindustani. When literate Burusho, and there are not many of them, have occasion to write, they do so in Persian for choice, or ●217 in Hindustani. The student of Burushaski has thus no manuscripts, ancient or modern, to turn to for enlightenment. He must go direct to the linguistic fountain-head — the *sujet parlant*. As far as contemporaneous speech is concerned, this is rather a blessing than a loss, but a series of manuscripts or inscriptions going back through some hundreds of years would throw an invaluable light on the development of the language. Lacking them, we cannot divine its history, nor make any guess as to its primitive forms. Only the co-existence of Werchikwar enables us sometimes to deduce that a word or form which occurs in the one as an isolated or rare phenomenon is a survival of what was once perhaps common property, or else normal in some dialect.

[1] I have never succeeded in getting anyone to recognise the word "Boorishki", the term applied to the language by Biddulph, and apparently accepted by Leitner, v. H. and N. Hdbk. p. 195 l. 2. Leitner also talks of the "Boorishki race". One cannot imagine that Biddulph and Leitner invented the term, so it would appear that it has gone out of use since their day. Possibly it may still flourish somewhere in Nagir. Leitner uses the term "Khajuna". This name is applied to Burushaski by outsiders and non-Burusho, as Leitner himself seems to admit (loc. cit.). I have heard the word used in Chalt, in opposition to Shina, by a man who was probably himself normally a Shina-speaker.

165 I checked as thoroughly as possible and there are at least a dozen men in Hunza over 100 years old and no doubt a hundred over 90. Yet the oldest man that I met was 105 years old but by his appearance, his speech and his activity, he'll be around for a good many years.

No, I don't think anybody was trying to fool me about their ages. I can't see what they could gain by it. On the other hand, I don't think I'd be the easiest man in the world to fool. At least my friends don't think I would be. If and when you meet the Hunza people, you will find that you accept them as a fine, upstanding, honest race. Therefore I cannot see why they would necessarily lie about their ages. Of course [217] no vital statistics are kept in Hunza and therefore they cannot offer proof by means of birth certificates concerning their ages.

I met a few groups of men, all of whom claimed to be in their 70's and over, and they were a mighty healthy looking bunch of individuals. Most certainly the average group of people in any part of America at that age wouldn't remotely resemble that fine group of Hunzans.

164 I don't think that is hard to understand. People who have been denied luxuries and who have had to work all their lives and spend a lot of time in the open air doing manual labor should be healthy, especially when they have good natural foods.

[165] It is my sincere belief that the ages and the health of the people of Hunza have not been too greatly exaggerated.

It is possible that I have strange ideas, but I've always believed that physical work and exercise have a lot to do with a man's health. Well, in Hunza if exercise will make them happy and healthy, they should be the happiest and healthiest people in all the world. There

842 mentioned above and so do women who have reached the menopause age become pregnant, but it doesn't happen every day.

Siring children at 90 *and* 100 *years of age*.—The only conclusive proof or record that I could find concerning men well up in years siring children was that of the Mir's grandfather, Sir Mohomed Nazim Khan, K.C.I.E. It is definitely recorded that he sired a son when he was in his 75th year.

Upon questioning and during discourse with the Mir, the resident doctor and the affected individuals themselves, it is clearly established that the siring of offspring at the age of 70 and upwards is quite common. Invariably it was revealed in these studies that the men had married younger women, their second or third wives. It is suggested that the answer lies somewhere close to this very important related fact.

165 [217] *Living to the age of* 140 *years*. The oldest man that I could find in Hunza was said to be 105 years old. I want to stress firmly that no vital statistics are kept in Hunza. Therefore it is not easy to establish any definite age or date. I will, however, accept this old man's age as being correct and established beyond doubt. The fact that he was alive before the Mir's grandfather was born (who died when 79 years of age in 1938) is ample proof that the statement is correct and true.

There are many people in Hunza over 90 years of age, quite a few over 95 years of age and some over 100 years.

142 165 *Their women are beautiful when they are* 70 *and* 80 *years old*. This I will agree is a statement that depends entirely upon a man's appreciation or understanding of beauty. I have seen old women of 80 who I thought were beautiful in a frail, wrinkled, grandmotherly way.

125 One evening, I took a census of the
165 nine teen-age boys in my wood-carv-
[123] ing school. Of these, all from well-to-
do households, how many had seen
death in their immediate families?
165 Here was the roll:
651 Gohor Hayat: mother, three brothers, two sisters; Sherin Beg: one brother, one sister; Nur-ud-Din: mother, two brothers, two sisters; Md. Hamid: mother, one sister; Burhan Shah: one brother, one sister; Nasar Md.: mother, two brothers, one sister; Mullah Madut: two brothers; Suleiman: one brother; Ghulam Rasul: father. In a country fabled for the long lives of its inhabitants, these are depressingly typical Asian statistics.
165 Moreover, there is little reason to be-
576 lieve that any of the old men are really as old as is claimed.

"How old are you?" I once asked a venerable patient.

"Ninety, Hazoor!" he answered.

"How do you know you're ninety?"

"Well, Hazoor, my hair is white, and I know I'm very old, and ninety is very old, so I must be ninety."

[124] My teen-aged assistant, Gohor Hayat, broke in impatiently, "Why do you
[217] waste time asking such questions?
[212] You know there are no records, because so few of my people can write!"

I had thought the old man might have a way of keeping count. "How old are you, Gohor Hayat?" I asked.

Gohor Hayat responded loftily, "I'm

[text continues on p. 43-C]

8:Clark N-5 (1948-1951) 1963
AV7 Burusho AV7
[P.43-C] Hunza

seventeen." Two years before he had told me he was thirteen.

Because the Hunzas, themselves, have no written records, I attempted to estimate longevity on the basis of physical signs of age.

THE elderly Hunzas, I discovered firsthand, show impressive dental evidence of being no older than sixty to seventy-five, not an unusual old-age in Western countries. Owing to a lack of vitamin D and milk in their diet, the great majority of Hunzas have soft teeth. A young man of about twenty-one, just cutting his wisdom teeth, typically has six-year molars that are worn flat. This allows a rate-of-wear calculation that is relatively dependable in determining age. For instance, a man over one hundred years old, at this rate, would have all his molars worn down to the jawbone, but this does not occur even in the teeth of the very oldest Hunzas.

"Purity" has been attributed to the Hunza diet, but the diet itself has seldom been more than superficially observed or related to its highly seasonal pattern. In the summertime the Hunza cuisine is limited, but not too bad. Chapatties—shaped like pancakes and made of coarse, whole-barley flour and water—form the staple, and salted tea is the beverage. Mulberries, fresh apricots, cucumbers, and occasionally sheep-milk butter round out the